A HEAP OF DUST.

Along the village road he came,
An old man stooped and gray;
But he stopped before a heap of sand
That in his pathway lay.

The sunlight came through the windblown leaves
And with alternate shine and shade,
It painted the mound and danced in the print
That a boyish foot had made.

And tears came into the old man's eyes,
He couldn't go on just then,
That mound and the print of a boyish foot
Brought his childhood back again.

He seated himself by a moss-grown stone,
His burden of years slipped away;
Again he was a carefree boy—
A boy in the dust at play.

It seemed that he scooped it into his hat,
In its gold he buried his feet,
Yet paused to list through the dewy air
To the lark's song, purely sweet.

Once more he let down the pasture bars,
And drove the cattle through;
Then stopped in the shade of the maple tree
To see where the robin flew.

Again he was down by the hurrying brook
Where the evening shadows were long—
Where the waters murmured: "Hush, hush"—
As they lapped against the stones.

Again the dust of a summer day
Was left in its water sweet,
Again he leaned, a boy's face to see,
'Mong the bubbles about his feet.

And then away through the twilight air,
As clear as the moonlight shone,
A voice, the voice of his mother, he heard,
Calling the children home.

Lower the old gray head had sunk,
Till it lay against the stone;
But a light, not that of the setting sun,
Over the wan face shone.

And forgot were the toil and the loneliness,
The long, long day was done.
Slowly his lips formed the answering words:
"Yes—mother—we're coming home."
—Carra Barnes, in Western Rural.

CHAPTER V.

HORRIBLE! HORRIBLE!!!

Mrs. Brown lived but a little distance from our house, and the neighborhood being in the country and sparsely settled, there was a great deal of passing and repassing between the two families. Mrs. Brown was a visitor at our place every week, and sometimes more frequently, and William Hanley often came with her, so that he and I had opportunities to become better acquainted, and the friendship we had formed on so short an acquaintance broadened and deepened week by week.

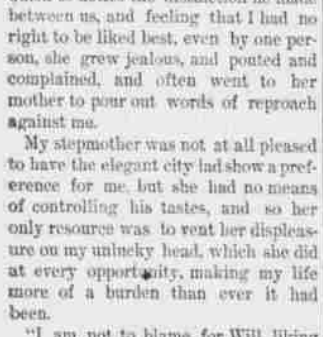
My sister formed a great liking for my new friend, and, he being five years her senior, treated her much as he would a baby, petting her and giving her little presents, but never showing her the interest he did me. Mary was quick to notice the distinction he made between us, and feeling that I had no right to be liked best, even by one person, she grew jealous, and pouted and complained, and often went to her mother to pour out words of reproach against me.

My stepmother was not at all pleased to have the elegant city lad show a preference for me, but she had no means of controlling his tastes, and so her only resource was to vent her displeasure on my unlucky head, which she did at every opportunity, making my life more of a burden than ever it had been.

"I am not to blame for Will liking me," I once ventured to urge in vindication of myself when my stepmother was soundly abusing me for being favored by him above her daughter. "I don't make him like me, and can't help it if he does think the most of me."

"Yes you can help it," my stepmother snapped out spitefully. "If you wasn't always putting yourself in his way and forcing yourself on him, he wouldn't take so much notice of you. I've watched you when he was here, and I've been perfectly ashamed of you when I saw how you put yourself forward to demand his attentions. I shudder for Mary's reputation when you are grown up, for I know you will disgrace her. I never saw such a forward, shameless creature as you are. Never."

I was too young, then, to understand the meaning of my stepmother's words, but they troubled me deeply, notwithstanding. I knew that their import, whatever their meaning, was to misrepresent and libel me, and that I was thus persecuted because I had succeeded in gaining the esteem of one person out of all I knew.



A FRIEND AT LAST.

I remember I thought it very hard that I could not have this one friend without him being grudged to me, when my sister had the attentions and love of everyone else. I thought that with all she had, I might be allowed the pleasure of one friendship uncoveted, and for the first time in my life I was slightly inclined to contend for my rights. Not that I did contend in the least, by word or act, but simply that I felt the inclination.

From that day my stepmother took every precaution she could to keep Will Hanley and I separated. She never permitted me to go to Mrs. Brown's if she could prevent it, and she was usually prepared to do that, and when Will came to our house she managed very well, by one device and another, to keep me out of his company, generally sending me to the kitchen to assist Aunt Mary, there to remain hour after hour, though Aunt Mary declared she did not need me and would rather have me out of the way.

Will and I contrived, however, to spend a great many hours together, and he plainly showed that he retained a preference for my company over that of my sister; and many were the well-meant compliments he paid to my character and personal appearance. True to his promise, he always spoke of my hair as auburn or golden locks, and he never failed to address me as Agnes or Aggie. He was so kind, and so considerate of my feelings, that I grew to love him more and more as the days passed.

One day, after I had known Will Hanley for several months, my stepmother was, for some cause, in an uncommonly bad humor with me, and, besides slapping and knocking me about unmercifully, applied to me all the vile epithets of which her tongue was master. She berated me for a hundred faults of which I was innocent, and spoke in the most sneering and abusive manner of my looks. I do not know why it was, but for some reason I felt the reproaches she heaped upon me more keenly than I ever had before, and I could not tamely submit without offering a word of protest. Her words stung me to the quick, and for the first time in my life I dared to speak in self-defense.

"What you say is not true," I said, flatly, when she ceased a tirade of the bitterest accusations.

I do not know how I ever had the courage to utter that speech, and no sooner was it out of my mouth than I was struck dumb with astonishment at the thought of my audacity. My stepmother, too, was evidently surprised almost out of her wits, and for a full minute she stood staring at me, her face a picture of wonder.

"Well," she said, at last, the look of wonder giving place to a flush of anger, "how dare you? How dare you say I lie?"

My courage rose as her anger increased, and with warmth I retorted:

"Because I am not guilty of the mean things you say of me, and I'm tired of being beaten and quarreled at for things I ain't to blame for."

My stepmother made no reply, but stood looking very hard at me, her face flushing and paling alternately. I knew

SHE GRASPED ME BY THE HAIR.

enough of her to realize that I had stirred her anger to the bottom and that I should have to pay a dear price for my daring speech, yet my courage did not wane, and in sheer desperation I continued:

"You all hate me, and you beat me worse than people beat their dogs, just for nothing. You accuse me of being mean when I'm not, and you tell people things about me that ain't true, so they won't like me. Mary has all the love and all the favors, and I get all the abuse, and yet I'm as good as she is, and better, too, because Will Hanley says so."

"Will Hanley?" my stepmother repeated in harsh, grating tones.

"Yes, Will Hanley," I replied, nothing daunted. "He says I'm better than Mary and prettier, too. He calls me Agnes, and says my hair is not red but golden, and he likes me."

I uttered these last words with a proud defiance that must have been extremely exasperating. I never saw anyone so affected by a speech as my stepmother was by mine. Her eyes fairly sparkled with anger while her face grew livid. She was wholly possessed by a passion that was uncontrollable.

She did not speak. I was standing before an open fire roasting coffee, and she came toward me with firmly compressed lips and set teeth. I shrank from her, for I saw a hatred as deep as death written in her features and actions, and I feared for my life. She grasped me by the hair and without a word dragged me to the fire. She placed my face in the flames and held it there till I sank down breathless. Then she dragged me away and left me lying on the floor to writhe and moan with the most excruciating pain.

Oh, what suffering, what suffering! What agony racked me from head to foot! I longed to die, and I begged my stepmother to kill me. She stood by and looked on unmoved. I even think she enjoyed seeing me suffer, and would rather have added to my pains than to have done aught to alleviate them.

"We'll see now," she remarked, with a tinge of satisfaction in her tones, "whether anybody says you are prettier than Mary. We'll see who talks about your golden curls, too. I think it will be awhile before you set yourself up as a beauty again; and I guess you won't want to accuse one of lying any more, either."

I believe my stepmother even smiled as she contemplated my plight, and I'm sure she enjoyed my sufferings. My sister, I am glad to say, was less heartless. She was shocked and grieved by the severity of my punishment, and set up such a wail that Aunt Mary came hurrying to the room to discover what it was about.

"Fo' de good lan' sake," the colored woman cried, as soon as her eyes rested on me. "What on dis yeah yeath has happened to dat po' chile dat she's all burned to death?"

"She fell in the fire through pure awkwardness," my stepmother replied, unblushingly. "Take her away," she continued, "and do something to stop her screams and groans. It distracts me to have such a fuss."

Aunt Mary looked at my stepmother as though she had something in mind she would like to speak, then muttering some incoherent words which I'm sure were not complimentary to that lady, she advanced and took me tenderly in her strong arms and carried me out of the room.

Aunt Mary was an excellent nurse, and she applied remedies with such good effect that in time my pains began to subside, and I fell asleep from exhaustion. When I awoke the faithful old servant was by my bed, watching over me with the tenderest care.

"How does yo' feel, now, honey?" she asked. "Better, I specks, don't yon?"

"Yes, much better, Aunt Mary. The pain is gone, now."

"Po' chile," she continued, "it must a hurt yo' jis awful."

"It did, Aunt Mary," I replied, "and it was an awful thing for her to do."

"What dat, honey?" and the old servant looked at me wonderingly. "What dat yo' say was a awful t'ing to do?"

"Why, for stepmother to hold me in the fire and burn my face."

Aunt Mary threw her hands up and stared at me in blank amazement.

"Sho'ly, chile," she said at last, "you's mistaken! Sho'ly, sho'ly missus wouldn't do dat!"

"She did," I replied. "She caught me and dragged to the fire and held my face in the flame till I thought I should surely die."

For an instant Aunt Mary could say nothing, and even then she could only ejaculate:

"Fo' de lan' sake! May de good Lawd hab mussy on 'er!"

CHAPTER VI.

SO SADLY ALTERED.

I don't suppose my father ever knew the facts concerning my misfortune. My stepmother, no doubt, informed him that I had fallen into the fire by accident, and there was no one to tell him differently, and if he had been told the truth he would certainly have taken her version in preference. I never thought to say aught to him concerning the matter, because I was fully confident that I should gain nothing if I did, and I feared that I might receive a beating for daring to say anything against my stepmother. It is altogether probable that my father would have condoned her crime if he had known of it, and heaped all the blame on me, but it is possible that I judge him wrongfully, and that he was not so lost to all natural affection for his own flesh and blood as to show such heartless disregard for my sufferings.

For several days I was confined to my garret room, and no one ever came to see me save Aunt Mary. She, bless her heart, was as kind and attentive as any mother could be, and not a wish of mine was allowed to go ungratified if she had the power of administering to it. She spared herself no pains, no exertions, no trouble, in her efforts to add to my comfort and convenience. When her duties did not call her elsewhere, she was with me day and night, and she was always doing something, or planning something, for my pleasure.

"Aunt Mary," I said to her once, when she was pottering about, puffing and sweating at a terrible rate, "do sit down and rest. You're very nearly exhausted, and I don't want you to be doing things for me. Please sit down."

"In a minute, honey," she replied. "I'se got to make sho' you's comfit'ble 'fore I takes any res'. Dat I is. What yo' reckon yo' po' ma, what is lookin' down from Heaben dis minute would t'ink ob me if I sot 'round yeah restin' my lazy ole body an' lettin' you suffer for anything? She ain't goin' to kotch me doin' ob it, honey, 'deed she ain't, ca'se I ain't done went an' forgot all de kin'nesses she showed me when she was yere on dis yearth."

"I *am* comfortable, Aunt Mary," I protested, "and I don't want a thing; so please sit down. I'll be perfectly unhappy if you don't. I won't have anything you fix for me, and if you don't rest I won't lie here."

I finally induced the old woman to sit in a chair by my bed, and with my hand resting in hers we talked of various things, chief among which was my mother. Then I spoke of my stepmother, and of the treatment I received at her hands, and lamented my situation in heartbroken terms. Aunt Mary listened, while the tears welled up in her eyes, then, lifting her honest, kind old black face to mine, said:

"Neber yo' min', chile, dar's a God in Heaben who rights eberyt'ins, an' dar's day ob reckonin' comin'. Dem is Gospel trufs, honey. Dar is a day ob reckonin', sho' as yo' is bawn, an' when dat day come 'round woe to dem what is wicked, an' dem what spitefully uses dem what is weak an' helpless. I tells yo', honey, I'd sholy a heap druther be in yo' shoes den than to be in de place ob some folks what I knows, ca'se in dat ter'ble day dem what's been prisecuted an' 'spised is goin' to git de top seat, an' de weddin' cake, an' all dem tings what is gwine to make folks monst'ous happy; while dem what has had deir own way, an' has been a gwine on in all deir wickedness an' hardness ob heart, am gwine to be drub out inter de darkness whar de debil 'll git 'em, sho.' Now yo jis' mark my words, honey, an, see if de day don't come when der little pot gits on top, an' when dem as is swingin' pow'ful high jis' now will git to swingin' pow'ful low. De Lawd is mouty pow'ful, honey, an', when he takes a notion he jis' shif's folks 'round wonderful. He does, sho'."

How long Aunt Mary talked I do not know, for I fell asleep while she was speaking, and though I heard her voice for some time the words quoted were all I remembered of her conversation. Those words, a sermon in themselves, made a deep impression on my mind, and scarcely a day has ever passed that I have not recalled them. They were a source of consolation to me, and often when I was sorely tired, and when my burden of trouble seemed heavier than I could bear, I thought of the great day of reckoning, and bore patiently on, knowing that there was a time coming in which my wrongs would be adjusted.

It was several days after my misfortune before I knew the full extent of the infliction I had suffered. Aunt Mary had made it appear as light as possible, and she had taken care that I should not have a glass in which to view my reflection, knowing, as she afterwards said, that the knowledge I should gain would only serve to augment my misery.

When at last I saw my face in a mirror, and viewed the ravages the fire had wrought, I was shocked beyond description. I felt that the bitterest part of my punishment had just come, and that the pain I had suffered was nothing. I was disfigured so that I looked frightful, and I had no doubt I would remain so for life. Ah, what bitter sorrow my appearance caused me to feel! and what tears I wept as I looked upon my reflection in the glass!

"No one will ever love me now," I moaned. "No one—no one."

Then I thought of Will Hanley, and my grief surged up afresh, submerging me completely. How could he look on my face, all scarred and drawn, without a feeling of revulsion? How could he like me now, when I had become so repulsive that I could not look upon my own image without a shudder?

"He will not, he will not," I cried, burying my face in my hands and pouring forth my grief in a flow of tears. "He will never like me again, and I shall be all alone, with not one friend in all the world."

I thought then that I would never have the courage to meet Will again, for I felt that it would grieve me beyond recovery to have him turn from me with loathing, as I thought he surely must when he saw my disfigured face. I felt that I must keep away from him, hide from him, and never, never let him look upon my features. Yet how could I bear to do that? How could I live without his friendship and his cheering words? There was a bitter struggle in my heart and I was exquisitely miserable. I knew not what to do, and in any case there was only suffering before me.

I was still weeping when I heard a footstep on the stairs. I listened, and my heart began to beat wildly. I knew that step was not Aunt Mary's, and I could associate it with but one person. It was, it surely was, I thought, the step of Will Hanley. I would have fled from the room, but that was impossible, as he was already at the door. I looked about for a place to hide and there was none, and all I could do was to sink down by the bedside and bury my face in the covers. I was resolved that he should not see my sadly altered features.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

BIG NOSES.

They Often Indicate Superior Mental Development.

It has come to light that children with accidental affections of the nostrils which grow chronic become stupid. An ill-working mucous membrane is enough to make a child a dunce. It may be that snuff became the rage in Europe toward the end of the seventeenth century, because it stimulated this member in the noses of august and illustrious persons. Bonaparte, who was a man of keen and quick perception, never chose, if he could help it, a man with a poor nose for a place of great responsibility. He had remarked that when the nose was large enough to be a good ventilator to his lungs, elasticity in troublous circumstances, resources and general efficiency might be looked for. The man with insufficient nose ventilations was liable to get into the blues, to lose presence of mind, to have a heavy head, and to take brandy to keep himself up to the mark.

Marshal Ney had a poor nose and a weak character. He was incapable of conceiving a plan, and needed the stimulus of battle to clear the cobwebs from his brain. Massena, the most resourceful of all Bonaparte's marshals, was large-nosed. So was Bernardotte, the most clever in intrigue and the least given to hero-worship. Gambetta had a large nose and a small amount of brain. The same may be said of the greatest literary artist that France ever produced—Renan. Jules Ferry is small-brained and big-nosed. Jules Simon has a big brain and a big nose, and is, taken all in all, one of the ablest of living Frenchmen. Princess Clementine, a woman of great capacity, has the large hooked nose of the seventeenth century Bourbons and Condes.

WEATHER SIGNS.

Living Indicators of Approaching Storms at Sea.

Birds are very largely associated with the weather by seafarers. In the English channel the fishermen regard the flight of the curlew on dark nights as a certain precursor of an east wind. The gales of the spring equinox, says London Tid Bits, are called Gowk storms, because they follow the cuckoo—almost everywhere regarded as a weather prophet. The appearance of the seamew promises rain and high southwest winds. Seagulls in the field mean a storm from the southeast. The stormy petrel is a bird of ill omen. But all these and other bird traditions may be traced to old Greek and Roman traditions, and possibly even still further back.

Then as to fishes, the appearance of dolphins and porpoises around a ship is an old sign of a storm. Shakespeare refers to it, as do several of the old play writers. And again we may find the explanation in the ancient mythical character of the dolphin. In old mythology the dolphin typifies the moon, and the moon is the weather maker. An old belief of sailors that to cut the hair and nails during a calm would certainly bring on a storm is plainly referable to the Greek maxim that the nails must not be pared before the gods.

It takes some people a long while to find out that poor health is not religion.

SLOW GROWTH OF THE OAK.

Sixty Years Old Before Good Seed Is Produced—Activity of the Roots.

The extreme limit of the age of the oak is not exactly known, but sound living specimens are at least one thousand years old. The tree thrives best in a deep, tenacious loam with rocks in it. Stagnant water is one of its aversions. It grows better on a comparatively poor sandy soil than on rich ground imperfectly drained. The trunk, at first inclined to be irregular in shape, straightens at maturity into a grand cylindrical shaft.

The oak does not produce good seed until it is more than sixty years old. The acorn is the fruit of the oak; the seed-germ is a very small object at the pointed end of the acorn, drops, and its contents doubtless undergo important molecular and chemical changes while it lies under its winter covering of leaves or snow. In the mild warmth of spring the acorn swells, the little root elongates, emerges from the end of the shell, and, no matter what the position of the acorn, turns downward. The root penetrates the soil two or three inches before the stalk begins to show itself and grow upward. The "meat of the acorn nourishes both root and stalk, and two years may pass before its store of food is entirely exhausted. At the end of a year the young oak has a root twelve to eighteen inches long, with numerous shorter rootlets, the stalk being from six to eight inches high. In this stage it differs from the sapling, and again the sapling differs from the tree. To watch these transformations under the lens is a fascinating occupation.

If an oak could be suspended in the air with all its roots and rootless perfect and unobscured the sight would be considered wonderful. The activity of the roots represents a great deal of power. They bore into the soil and flatten themselves to penetrate a crack in a rock. Invariably the tips turn away from the light. The growing point of a tiny outer root is the back of the tip a small distance. The tip is driven on by the force behind it and searches the soil for the easiest points of entrance. When the tips are destroyed by obstructions, cold, heat or other causes, a new growth starts in varying directions. The first roots thicken and become girders to support the tree, no longer feeding it directly, but serving as conduits for the moisture and nourishment gathered by the other rootlets, which are constantly boring their way into fresh territory. These absorb water charged with soluble earth, salts, sulphates, nitrates, phosphates of lime, magnesia and potash, etc, which passes through the larger roots, stem and branches to the leaves, the laboratory of new growth. An oak tree may have seven hundred thousand leaves, and from June to October evaporates two hundred and twenty-six times its own weight of water. Taking account of the new woods grown, "we obtain some idea of the enormous gain of matter and energy from the outside universe which goes on each summer."

Oak timber is not the heaviest, toughest nor most beautiful, but it combines more good qualities than any other kind. Its fruit is valuable food and its bark useful in certain industries. An oak pile submerged for six hundred and fifty years in London bridge came up in sound condition, and there are specimens from the Tower of London which date from the time of William Rufus. To produce a good oak grove requires from one hundred and forty to two hundred years. It seems a long time to an American, but forestry is a perpetual branch of economics when once established.—Ohio State Journal.

NOVEL METHOD OF EXECUTION.

The Sultan of Keddah's Plan for Putting Convicts Out of the Way.

The sultan of Keddah, in the Malay peninsula, has a remarkable method of carrying out the sentence of death upon condemned convicts. It is doubtful if this method of execution is practiced in any other part of the world. The sultan is the ruler of a country containing about sixty thousand people.

On the morning of the day fixed for the execution the sultan, followed by his ministers, goes about a mile and a half from the place to a vacant space reserved for the execution of criminals. Nothing can be seen in this place excepting the graves of the condemned and a large tree which is called the tree of execution. The sultan takes his seat in a chair at the foot of the tree, while his ministers group themselves around him on the ground. Then the condemned man is brought forward and made to kneel at a distance of about forty feet. His arms are tied behind his back and he is naked to the waist.

The executioner places upon the left shoulder of the condemned man a piece of cotton cloth. He then takes in his hands the lance of justice, which is very richly ornamented with silver, puts the point upon the man's left shoulder and grasps the handle firmly with both hands. When these preparations are made he looks at the sultan, who is holding the sword of justice in his lap. The sultan suddenly raises his hand, and this is the signal for the fatal blow.

At this moment the executioner, who is always a Hercules in strength, with one vigorous blow drives the lance through the man's shoulder and into his heart. He dies as quickly as though he had been shot through the heart, and probably is not conscious of suffering any pain. The executioner then withdraws the weapon, and stanches the small amount of blood flowing from the wound with the cotton cloth, in conformity with the rites of Islam. Usually the body of the victim is turned over to his family, who purify it by ablutions and hold elaborate funeral ceremonies. Mr. Jules Claine, who recently witnessed one of these executions, says that in his opinion the spectacle is not nearly so revolting as that of some methods of inflicting capital punishment.—N. Y. Sun.

—You can safely quarrel with an actress, because she never refuses to "make up."—Providence Journal.